

**EIGHTH SCENE--THE PANTRY.**

**CHAPTER THE THIRTY-NINTH. - ANNE WINS A VICTORY.**

ON a certain evening in the month of September (at that period of the month when Arnold and Blanche were traveling back from Baden to Ham Farm) an ancient man--with one eye filmy and blind, and one eye moist and merry--sat alone in the pantry of the Harp of Scotland Inn, Perth, pounding the sugar softly in a glass of whisky-punch. He has hitherto been personally distinguished in these pages as the self-appointed father of Anne Silvester and the humble servant of Blanche at the dance at Swanhaven Lodge. He now dawns on the view in amicable relations with a third lady--and assumes the mystic character of Mrs. Glenarm's "Friend in the Dark."

Arriving in Perth the day after the festivities at Swanhaven, Bishopriggs proceeded to the Harp of Scotland--at which establishment for the reception of travelers he possessed the advantage of being known to the landlord as Mrs. Inchbare's right-hand man, and of standing high on the head-waiter's list of old and intimate friends.

Inquiring for the waiter first by the name of Thomas (otherwise Tammy) Pennyquick, Bishopriggs found his friend in sore distress of body and mind. Contending vainly against the disabling advances of rheumatism, Thomas Pennyquick ruefully contemplated the prospect of being laid up at home by a long illness--with a wife and children to support, and with the emoluments attached to his position passing into the pockets of the first stranger who could be found to occupy his place at the inn.

Hearing this doleful story, Bishopriggs cunningly saw his way to serving his own private interests by performing the part of Thomas Pennyquick's generous and devoted friend.

He forthwith offered to fill the place, without taking the emoluments, of the invalided headwaiter--on the understanding, as a matter of course, that the landlord consented to board and lodge him free of expense at the inn. The landlord having readily accepted this condition, Thomas Pennyquick retired to the bosom of his family. And there was Bishopriggs, doubly secured behind a respectable position and a virtuous action against all likelihood of

suspicion falling on him as a stranger in Perth--in the event of his correspondence with Mrs. Glenarm being made the object of legal investigation on the part of her friends!

Having opened the campaign in this masterly manner, the same sagacious foresight had distinguished the operations of Bishopriggs throughout.

His correspondence with Mrs. Glenarm was invariably written with the left hand--the writing thus produced defying detection, in all cases, as bearing no resemblance of character whatever to writing produced by persons who habitually use the other hand. A no less far-sighted cunning distinguished his proceedings in answering the advertisements which the lawyers duly inserted in the newspaper. He appointed hours at which he was employed on business-errands for the inn, and places which lay on the way to those errands, for his meetings with Mrs. Glenarm's representatives: a pass-word being determined on, as usual in such cases, by exchanging which the persons concerned could discover each other. However carefully the lawyers might set the snare--whether they had their necessary "witness" disguised as an artist sketching in the neighborhood, or as an old woman selling fruit, or what not--the wary eye of Bishopriggs detected it. He left the pass-word unspoken; he went his way on his errand; he was followed on suspicion; and he was discovered to be only "a respectable person," charged with a message by the landlord of the Harp of Scotland Inn!

To a man intrenched behind such precautions as these, the chance of being detected might well be reckoned among the last of all the chances that could possibly happen.

Discovery was, nevertheless, advancing on Bishopriggs from a quarter which had not been included in his calculations. Anne Silvester was in Perth; forewarned by the newspaper (as Sir Patrick had guessed) that the letters offered to Mrs. Glenarm were the letters between Geoffrey and herself, which she had lost at Craig Fernie, and bent on clearing up the suspicion which pointed to Bishopriggs as the person who was trying to turn the correspondence to pecuniary account. The inquiries made for him, at Anne's request, as soon as she arrived in the town, openly described his name, and his former position as headwaiter at Craig Fernie--and thus led easily to the discovery of him, in his publicly avowed character of Thomas Pennyquick's devoted friend. Toward evening, on the day after she reached Perth, the news came to Anne that Bishopriggs was in service at the inn known as the Harp of Scotland. The landlord of the hotel at which she was staying inquired whether he should send a message for her. She answered, "No, I will take my message myself. All I want is a person to show me the way to

the inn."

Secluded in the solitude of the head-waiter's pantry, Bishopriggs sat peacefully melting the sugar in his whisky-punch.

It was the hour of the evening at which a period of tranquillity generally occurred before what was called "the night-business" of the house began. Bishopriggs was accustomed to drink and meditate daily in this interval of repose. He tasted the punch, and smiled contentedly as he set down his glass. The prospect before him looked fairly enough. He had outwitted the lawyers in the preliminary negotiations thus far. All that was needful now was to wait till the terror of a public scandal (sustained by occasional letters from her "Friend in the Dark") had its due effect on Mrs. Glenarm, and hurried her into paying the purchase-money for the correspondence with her own hand. "Let it breed in the brain," he thought, "and the siller will soon come out o' the purse."

His reflections were interrupted by the appearance of a slovenly maid-servant, with a cotton handkerchief tied round her head, and an uncleaned sauce-pan in her hand.

"Eh, Maister Bishopriggs," cried the girl, "here's a braw young leddy speerin' for ye by yer ain name at the door."

"A leddy?" repeated Bishopriggs, with a look of virtuous disgust. "Ye donnert ne'er-do-weel, do you come to a decent, 'sponsible man like me, wi' sic a Cyprian overture as that? What d'ye tak' me for? Mark Antony that lost the world for love (the mair fule hel)? or Don Jovanny that counted his concubines by hundreds, like the blessed Solomon himself? Awa' wi' ye to yer pots and pans; and bid the wandering Venus that sent ye go spin!"

Before the girl could answer she was gently pulled aside from the doorway, and Bishopriggs, thunder-struck, saw Anne Silvester standing in her place.

"You had better tell the servant I am no stranger to you," said Anne, looking toward the kitchen-maid, who stood in the passage staring at her in stolid amazement.

"My ain sister's child!" cried Bishopriggs, lying with his customary readiness. "Go yer ways, Maggie. The bonny lassie's my ain kith and kin. The tongue o' scandal, I trow, has naething to say against that.--Lord save

us and guide us!" he added In another tone, as the girl closed the door on them, "what brings ye here?"

"I have something to say to you. I am not very well; I must wait a little first. Give me a chair."

Bishopriggs obeyed in silence. His one available eye rested on Anne, as he produced the chair, with an uneasy and suspicious attention. "I'm wanting to know one thing," he said. "By what meeraiculous means, young madam, do ye happen to ha' fund yer way to this inn?"

Anne told him how her inquiries had been made and what the result had been, plainly and frankly. The clouded face of Bishopriggs began to clear again.

"Hech! hech!" he exclaimed, recovering all his native impudence, "I hae had occasion to remark already, to anither leddy than yersel', that it's seemply mairvelous hoo a man's ain gude deeds find him oot in this lower warld o' ours. I hae dune a gude deed by pure Tammy Pennyquick, and here's a' Pairth ringing wi the report o' it; and Sawmuel Bishopriggs sae weel known that ony stranger has only to ask, and find him. Understand, I beseech ye, that it's no hand o' mine that pets this new feather in my cap. As a gude Calvinist, my saul's clear o' the smallest figment o' belief in Warks. When I look at my ain celeebriety I joost ask, as the Psawmist asked before me, 'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?' It seems ye've something to say to me," he added, suddenly reverting to the object of Anne's visit. "Is it humanly possible that ye can ha' come a' the way to Pairth for naething but that?"

The expression of suspicion began to show itself again in his face. Concealing as she best might the disgust that he inspired in her, Anne stated her errand in the most direct manner, and in the fewest possible words.

"I have come here to ask you for something," she said.

"Ay? ay? What may it be ye're wanting of me?"

"I want the letter I lost at Craig Fernie."

Even the solidly-founded self-possession of Bishopriggs himself was shaken by the startling directness of that attack on it. His glib tongue was paralyzed for the moment. "I dinna ken what ye're drivin' at," he said, after an interval,

with a sullen consciousness that he had been all but tricked into betraying himself.

The change in his manner convinced Anne that she had found in Bishopriggs the person of whom she was in search.

"You have got my letter," she said, sternly insisting on the truth. "And you are trying to turn it to a disgraceful use. I won't allow you to make a market of my private affairs. You have offered a letter of mine for sale to a stranger. I insist on your restoring it to me before I leave this room!"

Bishopriggs hesitated again. His first suspicion that Anne had been privately instructed by Mrs. Glenarm's lawyers returned to his mind as a suspicion confirmed. He felt the vast importance of making a cautious reply.

"I'll no' waste precious time," he said, after a moment's consideration with himself, "in brushing awa' the fawse breath o' scandal, when it passes my way. It blaws to nae purpose, my young leddy, when it blaws on an honest man like me. Fie for shame on ye for saying what ye've joost said--to me that was a fether to ye at Craig Fernie! Wha' set ye on to it? Will it be man or woman that's misca'ed me behind my back?"

Anne took the Glasgow newspaper from the pocket of her traveling cloak, and placed it before him, open at the paragraph which described the act of extortion attempted on Mrs. Glenarm.

"I have found there," she said, "all that I want to know."

"May a' the tribe o' editors, preenters, paper-makers, news-vendors, and the like, bleeze together in the pit o' Tophet!" With this devout aspiration--internally felt, not openly uttered--Bishopriggs put on his spectacles, and read the passage pointed out to him. "I see naething here touching the name o' Sawmuel Bishopriggs, or the matter o' ony loss ye may or may not ha' had at Craig Fernie," he said, when he had done; still defending his position, with a resolution worthy of a better cause.

Anne's pride recoiled at the prospect of prolonging the discussion with him. She rose to her feet, and said her last words.

"I have learned enough by this time," she answered, "to know that the one argument that prevails with you is the argument of money. If money will spare me the hateful necessity of disputing with you--poor as I am, money you shall have. Be silent, if you please. You are personally interested in

what I have to say next."

She opened her purse, and took a five-pound note from it.

"If you choose to own the truth, and produce the letter," she resumed, "I will give you this, as your reward for finding, and restoring to me, something that I had lost. If you persist in your present prevarication, I can, and will, make that sheet of note-paper you have stolen from me nothing but waste paper in your hands. You have threatened Mrs. Glenarm with my interference. Suppose I go to Mrs. Glenarm? Suppose I interfere before the week is out? Suppose I have other letters of Mr. Delamayn's in my possession, and produce them to speak for me? What has Mrs. Glenarm to purchase of you then? Answer me that!"

The color rose on her pale face. Her eyes, dim and weary when she entered the room, looked him brightly through and through in immeasurable contempt. "Answer me that!" she repeated, with a burst of her old energy which revealed the fire and passion of the woman's nature, not quenched even yet!

If Bishopriggs had a merit, it was a rare merit, as men go, of knowing when he was beaten. If he had an accomplishment, it was the accomplishment of retiring defeated, with all the honors of war.

"Mercy presairve us!" he exclaimed, in the most innocent manner. "Is it even You Yersel' that writ the letter to the man ca'ed Jaffray Delamayn, and got the wee bit answer in pencil on the blank page? Hoo, in Heeven's name, was I to know that was the letter ye were after when ye cam' in here? Did ye ever tell me ye were Anne Silvester, at the hottle? Never ance! Was the pair feckless husband-creature ye had wi' ye at the inn, Jaffray Delamayn? Jaffray wad mak' twa o' him, as my ain eyes ha' seen. Gi' ye back yer letter? My certie! noo I know it is yer letter, I'll gi' it back wi' a' the pleasure in life!"

He opened his pocket-book, and took it out, with an alacrity worthy of the honestest man in Christendom--and (more wonderful still) he looked with a perfectly assumed expression of indifference at the five-pound note in Anne's hand.

"Hoot! toot!" he said, "I'm no' that clear in my mind that I'm free to tak' yer money. Eh, weel! weel! I'll een receive it, if ye like, as a bit Memento o' the time when I was o' some sma' sairvice to ye at the hottle. Ye'll no' mind," he added, suddenly returning to business, "writin' me joost a line--in the way o' receipt, ye ken--to clear me o' ony future suspicion in the matter o' the

letter?"

Anne threw down the bank-note on the table near which they were standing, and snatched the letter from him.

"You need no receipt," she answered. "There shall be no letter to bear witness against you!"

She lifted her other hand to tear it in pieces. Bishopriggs caught her by both wrists, at the same moment, and held her fast.

"Bide a wee!" he said. "Ye don't get the letter, young madam, without the receipt. It may be a' the same to you, now ye've married the other man, whether Jaffray Delamayn ance promised ye fair in the by-gone time, or no. But, my certie! it's a matter o' some moment to me, that ye've chaired wi' stealin' the letter, and making a market o't, and Lord knows what besides, that I suld hae yer ain acknowledgment for it in black and white. Gi' me my bit receipt--and een do as ye will with yer letter after that!"

Anne's hold of the letter relaxed. She let Bishopriggs repossess himself of it as it dropped on the floor between them, without making an effort to prevent him.

"It may be a' the same to you, now ye've married the other man, whether Jaffray Delamayn ance promised ye fair in the by-gone time, or no." Those words presented Anne's position before her in a light in which she had not seen it yet. She had truly expressed the loathing that Geoffrey now inspired in her, when she had declared, in her letter to Arnold, that, even if he offered her marriage, in atonement for the past, she would rather be what she was than be his wife. It had never occurred to her, until this moment, that others would misinterpret the sensitive pride which had prompted the abandonment of her claim on the man who had ruined her. It had never been brought home to her until now, that if she left him contemptuously to go his own way, and sell himself to the first woman who had money enough to buy him, her conduct would sanction the false conclusion that she was powerless to interfere, because she was married already to another man. The color that had risen in her face vanished, and left it deadly pale again. She began to see that the purpose of her journey to the north was not completed yet.

"I will give you your receipt," she said. "Tell me what to write, and it shall be written."



Bishopriggs dictated the receipt. She wrote and signed it. He put it in his pocket-book with the five-pound note, and handed her the letter in exchange.

"Tear it if ye will," he said. "It matters naething to me."

For a moment she hesitated. A sudden shuddering shook her from head to foot--the forewarning, it might be, of the influence which that letter, saved from destruction by a hair's-breadth, was destined to exercise on her life to come. She recovered herself, and folded her cloak closer to her, as if she had felt a passing chill.

"No," she said; "I will keep the letter."

She folded it and put it in the pocket of her dress. Then turned to go--and stopped at the door.

"One thing more," she added. "Do you know Mrs. Glenarm's present address?"

"Ye're no' reely going to Mistress Glenarm?"

"That is no concern of yours. You can answer my question or not, as you please."

"Eh, my leddy! yer temper's no' what it used to be in the auld times at the hottle. Aweel! aweel! ye ha' gi'en me yer money, and I'll een gi' ye back gude measure for it, on my side. Mistress Glenarm's awa' in private--incog, as they say--to Jaffray Delamayn's brither at Swanhaven Lodge. Ye may rely on the information, and it's no' that easy to come at either. They've keepit it a secret as they think from a' the world. Hech! hech! Tammy Pennyquick's youngest but twa is page-boy at the hoose where the leddy's been veesitin', on the outskirts o' Pairth. Keep a secret if ye can frae the pawky ears o' yer domestics in the servants' hall!--Eh! she's aff, without a word at parting!" he exclaimed, as Anne left him without ceremony in the middle of his dissertation on secrets and servants' halls. "I trow I ha' gaen out for wool, and come back shorn," he added, reflecting grimly on the disastrous overthrow of the promising speculation on which he had embarked. "My certie! there was naething left for't, when madam's fingers had grippit me, but to slip through them as cannily as I could. What's Jaffray's marrying, or no' marrying, to do wi' her?" he wondered, reverting to the question which Anne had put to him at parting. "And whar's the sense o' her errand, if she's reely bent on finding her way to Mistress Glenarm?"



Whatever the sense of her errand might be, Anne's next proceeding proved that she was really bent on it. After resting two days, she left Perth by the first train in the morning, for Swanhaven Lodge.